The Middleborough Antiquarian

Devoted to the preservation of local history by

MIDDLEBOROUGH HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

Established 1922

VOLUME 3 October 1961 NUMBER 4

BRINGING OUR PAST INTO OUR PRESENT PRESERVING OUR PRESENT FOR THE FUTURE

When the United States decided to become a nation they had to put up their "dukes" and fight. When the Insurance Co. of North America began life in 1792 they ran right into the War of 1812, and had to roll up their sleeves, and struggle to a man for existence. When the New York Historical Society was established in 1804, it faced the same lack of public interest in the preservation of history as we do in Massachusetts today. And when every young couple is married and starts out in life, the new family begins hitting troubles, worries and problems.

The United States has become the greatest nation on earth, the North American Insurance Co., is surely one of the best and soundest in business in 1961, the New York Historical Society has survived four fires, lean years, wars and depressions to become one of the outstanding repositories of American history in the world. As to the millions of young couples who make up the United States it must be admitted that we can boast more than any other country, we can't all succeed -- that's life.

The Middleborough Historical Association, Inc., né the Old Middleborough Historical Association, approaches its 40th year. It hasn't been faced with as many trials and tribulations as the Country and the Commonwealth, whose history it is dedicated to preserve. But it has encountered many of the same frustrations as the New York Historical Society, and I think the forty year record at this writing compares quite favorably with the hundred and fifty nine years of its senior partner in the proper recording of the accomplishments of its own community. Perhaps we brag, yet it has always been true, that he who buries his efforts in a bushel basket is a fool. We are surely way above the average young couple -- perhaps we might say one of the 400 of the four million.

Facing facts, though we pat ourselves on the back, this is no time to drag our heels; it is the moment to work harder than ever. We have created enough local interest in our aims and ambitions to warrant the faith and trust of our Board of Selectmen to the extent of one acre of Civic Center property with two ca. 1820 houses. We have started something we can't stop. We have invested our own savings of

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* FALL MEETING *

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* MONDAY *

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* OCTOBER 16, 1961 *

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* Junior High School Musicorium *

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* 8:00 P. M. *

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roughly 38 years, plus the generous contributions of both resident and out of town members -- plus thoughtful contributions of friends from Maine to Mount Vernon, Virginia. We intend to keep faith with many non-members and new members who have recently joined our ranks in the effort to recognize nearly 300 years of Middleboro living - from the men who have mowed, moved pianos and trash, auctioneered and sweated mentally and physically in one way or another to help us carry on.

As we report this 17th day of September, the Museum is open for the first time with the Tom Thumb collection properly displayed, the old basement kitchen cleaned up and restored through the knowledge and work of our secretary, Dick Wotten, and in all, six rooms are in order. Roughly, there are nearly twenty early nineteenth century rooms awaiting our attention-lest you rest on your oars with a sigh, and think the Middleborough Historical Museum has become a full-fledged contribution.

It would be nice to recount the progress during the past year with the names of all those who have pitched in and made this opening possible. However, with the many demands on all hands it is only just barely reasonable to issue the Antiquarian at all - even as the news letter into which it seems to be developing. If you want to check back, we suggest that you hunt up your copy of Vol.1, #1 and Vol. 3, #2. Between these two issues you will find a chronology of events that may surprise you.

Since June, acquisitions have been pouring in and fitted into place in plans for exhibits on Historic Jackson Street. In writing Historic Jackson Street as well as creating it there is satisfaction in knowing that the California Historical Society is located at 2090 Jackson Street, San Francisco! To begin a list in this short bulletin we are issuing between 3 and 6 a. m., just to keep you posted and interested, would be folly. The best way to find out what is happening, is to drop in

and see for yourselves.The Museum will be open every Sunday afternoon this Fall, weather permitting. It has been the studied opinion of the Committee that Heating and plumbing must be put off until Spring in order to conserve our meager funds to complete the restoration of the corner house against Winter.

Thanks to the interest of the men now working on Jackson Street installing pipe and repaving, we have acquired 30 feet of the original wooden pipe that connected with the old pump now in our collections.

There is little question but that this well, in all probability, once served the Peirce farm and store, and later as the town grew,this entire section at the corner of Jackson and North Main Streets. When the street was first paved in 1927, someone rescued the pump and tucked it in the Peirce barn where we discovered it when the town tore it down for a parking area and proposed park.The old mill stone from one of Col.Peirce's many water powers on the river covered the well hole,and is now sitting proudly on the lawn of our corner building. Perhaps the Garden Club will find a more fitting place when the landscaping begins next Spring. I doubt very much if any other museum in New England can boast a nineteenth century wooden pump complete with 30 feet of original bored wooden pipe, with iron bound wood couplings, still able to hold water!

Carrying this story back to the value of historical records, see the Antiquarian, Vol. 3, #3, page 3- "Further Notes on the Tinkham Family." On July 16, 1852 Josiah and Charles Tinkham "fixed Col. Peirce's pump." Throughout this diary, "the boys" were lugging in logs, making pumps and boring pipes. They were Middleboro's original plumbers, and without such records the next generation might grow up thinking that cast brass and iron pipe, as well as nickel faucets, were manufactured right back through the past two hundred years. It is one thing to read history books but quite another to see and feel what our grandparents made and used.

PLAY WHIST!!

Thanks to Jim Butler and Carl Leland, we look forward to the proceeds from a grand WHIST PARTY they are planning for OCT.2nd. By the time this issue is mailed we should have news from the Junior High School Cafeteria, that funds for the red paint with white trim for the corner house is in the treasury. During the Summer months everyone uses the old excuses about heat, humidity, vacations, gardens, lawns and general lazines - here it is the best months of the year - Fall.Who is going to follow upon their Summer promises next? Don't just stand there and read about it - gird up your loins and DO SOMETHING!!!.

From archives to whaling records, we plan to match the historical ingenuity of our neighbors in historical crime in 1962. To date most American historical libraries, museums and other institutions like to preserve Americana in its many facets up to the Civil War. There was a time when 1800 was considered a sort of limit for historical collections. Today, as we roar on to the year 2000, we must recognize that history is being made every month. In 1800, a man who manufactured a wooden pump and thirty feet of wood pipe in a week was a pretty smart craftsman; if he could manage to get fifty cents in cash with other foodstuffs or merchandise for his work, he was even smarter. Today his great-grandson is probably paid $3.00 per hour for running a machine that accomplishes five hundred times the work each hour. At the present rate of invention and creation we are outmoding last year's products before they are worn out - AND we must remember that this process calls for thinking historians and curators. The museum of today that holds fast to an antiquarian date limit for its collections of, say 1880, is allowing history to get so far ahead of it that by the time it wakes up, yesterday's artifacts will have 20th century prices attached - and with inflation growing, will be unobtainable. We hope that we will be one of the first to recognize this problem.

At our own auction, Aug. 12th, we rescued "The 20th Century Washer" even though the old crank is missing. If the housewife of today had to use one, she'd quit tomorrow and leave for Reno. This contrivance invented and manufactured in 1899, was the rage --- now it is real American history; you wouldn't believe it, unless you could see and feel it. Maybe we can devise a crank so that you can try it.We will also have in the library(another dream to which you can all contribute before you clean out the attic next Spring) the original color illustrated booklet, issued by the 20th Century Washer Co., of Chicago.

We hope that you will read this short historical bulletin generously, and trust in us to produce the records from our archives we have promised. We have two biographical articles offered, and miles of unpublished Yankee tales that will be printed before 1962 is out. At the moment with Middleboro's 300th Anniversary approaching, we feel that we must bend the oars to completing our Museum as our contribution. When we have our blacksmith's shop, drug store, cowler's shop,potter's establishment ready for Yankee and Texan, as well as Tom and Lavinia Thumb, Colonel Peirce's general store, an art gallery and library arranged and set up - then we will be able better to publish an Antiquarian comparable to the Old Time New England, Dukes County Intelligencer, Historic Nantucket and others of which our members of the Bay State League are justly proud.

Bear with us. Drop in on Jackson Street next Sunday, and look us over. It isn't Pilgrim Hall or Sturbridge Village,but it is Middleboro's contribution to American history and we'r durned proud of it.Please try to remember, we are doing it FOR YOU. It isn't the property or pet project of <u>just</u> the Middleborough Historical Association -- it's by ALL Middleboro - for ALL Middleboro.

L. B. Romaine